United Nations system ACC/2000/24

Administrative Committee on Coordination

13 August 2001

English only

Report of the High-level Committee on Management at its first regular session of 2000

United Nations Headquarters, 11 and 12 December 2000

1. The High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) held its first regular session of 2000 at United Nations Headquarters, on 11 and 12 December. The agenda of the session was as follows:

1. Structure, functioning and secretariat support of the High-level Committee on Management and those entities reporting thereto.
2. Future work programme.
3. Current concerns for effective recruitment.
4. Other business.

Opening of the session

2. In opening the session, the Secretary of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) drew the attention of HLCM to the conclusions of the ACC session in October 2000 in respect of the structure and functioning of ACC. He referred to a communication dated 7 December 2000 that he had addressed, on behalf of the Secretary-General, to the executive heads concerning appointments to the bureaux of the two new high-level committees. In this connection, he noted that the names of Joseph Connor, Under-Secretary-General for Department for Management of the United Nations, and David Waller, Deputy Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency had been proposed to serve, respectively, as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the High-level Committee on Management for a two-year term. He also informed the Committee that Roger Eggleston would serve as its Secretary.

3. The Committee unanimously welcomed these proposals. Mr. Connor and Mr. Waller were thus elected as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, respectively, of HLCM for a period of two years.

I. Structure, functioning and secretariat support for the High-level Committee and entities reporting thereto

4. In carrying out a review of its functioning, the High-level Committee recalled its terms of reference, approved by ACC at its meeting in October 2000, and in particular the following:

> "HLCM acts on behalf of and in the name of ACC on matters affecting the administrative management of all member organizations, both multisectoral and specific to a given area.
>
> "It is charged with identifying and analysing administrative management issues of common concern, which require a system-wide response. It is authorized to take decisions on behalf of the executive heads and to identify, promote and coordinate management reforms that will improve services, achieve productivity improvements and increase efficiency and effectiveness across the United Nations system. It is also responsible for:

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"• Ensuring the frank sharing of knowledge and experiences in order to enable organizations to profit from best practices;

"• Facilitating the continuing dialogue on the reform processes and the management of change under way in the organizations of the system."

5. It took note that, in its decision, ACC had called for a zero-based approach in reviewing its subsidiary machinery, that is, the starting point should be what needs to be done at the inter-agency level in areas of system-wide concern rather than what was being done at present. It also took note of the ACC request for a thorough analysis of areas requiring system-wide inter-agency collaboration and the need to identify the most suitable mechanisms to achieve such collaboration, bearing in mind the wish of ACC that permanent bodies should be kept to a minimum and their retention based on rigorous criteria.

6. The Committee concluded that, while the manner in which the work of the committees which had, until then, been reporting directly or indirectly to ACC would relate to or interface with that of HLCM might differ, some elements were common.

7. In all cases, the new arrangements should: (a) obviate the need for any standing committees; (b) require adequate "cross-over" in membership between HLCM and meetings of specialists; and (c) call for strong support from the unified ACC secretariat.

8. Hence, while meetings of a variety of specialists should continue, their work should be closely linked to the work programme of HLCM in order, inter alia, to ensure that issues which cut across different substantive areas were dealt with in a strategic and coherent manner. In this way, HLCM would be able to take account of any competing priorities that might otherwise impede progress in a given area.

9. The Committee considered that, in respect of the work in the substantive areas under review (human resources, financial and information and communication technology management), the criteria below would apply.

10. In respect of work in the area of human resources management:

(a) Issues on the current work programme of the directors of human resources would be pursued through task forces;

(b) However, on behalf of ACC/HLCM, common system directors of human resources would meet immediately prior to sessions of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), normally for not more than three days, to review all matters under consideration by ICSC, determine common positions to put before ICSC, select their spokesperson(s) and authorize them to make representations on behalf of ACC/HLCM and determine what mechanisms would be set in place to react to developments which might take place during the course of the session of ICSC so as to enable representatives of organizations to be present only for issues of interest to their organizations;

(c) On the basis of specific requests from HLCM, the directors of human resources could also review policy issues of common concern on the occasion of their meeting held prior to the ICSC session;

(d) A member of HLCM would be designated to participate in the meetings of the directors.

11. In respect of work in the areas of budget and finance:

(a) Issues would be pursued in future through task forces;

(b) However, directors of budget and finance (as appropriate and relevant to the subject matter) could hold short agenda-driven meetings if they so wished to exchange views on financial policy issues and to deal with any other issues which, in their opinion, require discussion by their meeting together;

(c) Different types of budgeting arrangements (regular, voluntary and, to some degree, commercial) would also be more fully evaluated and compared;

(d) A member of HLCM would be designated to participate in the meeting of directors of budget and finance;

12. In respect of work in the area of information and communication technology:

(a) HLCM would itself be responsible for moving forward strategic concerns in information and communication technology (ICT) and, to this end,

would review these at each of its sessions at which a chief information officer (i.e., an executive information and technology officer from one of the organizations of the system) would be invited to exchange information on trends across the system;

(b) Task forces should focus on:

(i) Issues which would have a strategic impact on the United Nations family as a whole;

(ii) Issues in which inter-agency intervention would make a difference, for example, best practice in production, dissemination of documentation electronically;

(iii) Assisting HLCM in determining what future changes in ICT could be anticipated and how these could be planned for within the United Nations family;

(iv) Frank exchanges of information on successes and failures in technological developments;

(v) Issues which link ICT to other management areas (human resources, payroll, procurement, management information, etc.);

(c) A member of HLCM would be designated to participate in the agenda-driven meetings of ICT managers.

II. Future work programme

13. The Committee took note of the work programmes currently under way in three substantive areas (human resources, finance and budget, and information and communication technology). It requested the secretariat to merge these with the work of HLCM, establishing time lines and output indicators for each activity in developing a forward-looking, coherent (i.e. non-overlapping) strategic management work programme.

14. After an analysis of key concerns and building on the activities referred to above, the Committee concluded that its work should focus on the following five priority areas:

(a) *Zero nominal growth* — its impact on organizations of the United Nations system;

(b) *Capitalizing on technology* — the management of cross-cutting ICT concerns throughout the system and the identification of issues which will make a strategic impact and lead to efficiencies and savings;

(c) *Simplification* — in procedures, processes and entitlements;

(d) *Sustainable employability* — the fact that a life-long career would no longer be the employment model and the consequences thereof for conditions of employment, contractual policy, exit strategies and the like;

(e) *Staff security.*

15. The secretariat was requested to prepare short position papers on each of these areas for the Committee's consideration.

16. To carry out the work programme, HLCM agreed that a dedicated web site of members should be established to ensure continuing consultations among them. Bulletin boards in priority areas would also be created. The secretariat would be responsible for these technological initiatives and for actively maintaining exchanges among HLCM members.

17. In this connection, HLCM noted that the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs in New York and the various inter-agency secretariats at Geneva would henceforth be merged into a single ACC secretariat with offices in both locations. Budgetary levels for the single secretariat for the biennium 2002-2003 would remain the same as those for the current biennium.

18. The Committee also noted that the work of the secretariat was, by its very nature, multiskilled. Hence, the competencies required in each secretariat post would need to be carefully developed. In this connection, it would also be important to complement the core staff with others on loan from organizations — a matter which would also be signalled for the attention of ACC. Consultant support could also be added to the core secretariat to ensure that capabilities in all management areas were maintained.

19. In discussions relating to the development of its future work programme, HLCM considered that two clarifications in respect of paragraph 5 of its terms of reference were warranted. First, reference to interaction with the chairpersons of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and ICSC was not intended to be restrictive; contacts with the chairpersons of other entities, such as the Joint

Inspection Unit and the Board of Auditors were also foreseen. Second, the reference to ongoing dialogue with the staff representatives on concerns of a system-wide nature was seen to be a key component of future sessions of HLMC. The Committee therefore requested its secretariat to put forward proposals as to how fruitful dialogue with staff representatives could be maximized.

III. Current concerns for effective recruitment

20. In considering the question of recruitment, the Chairperson invited HLCM members to suggest innovative changes which, inter alia, would speed up the recruitment process. Among the ideas put forward were:

(a) More creative job advertisements;

(b) Use of generic job descriptions;

(c) Rostering and/or pooling of pre-screened applicants;

(d) Use of headhunters;

(e) Use of "remote" assessment centres;

(f) Simplification of processes;

(g) Improved working environments;

(h) Focusing on lower level recruitments based on pools and/or rosters;

(i) Making employment conditions more competitive.

21. Arising from its discussion, HLCM requested the secretariat to prepare a position paper which would: (a) consider how organizations might pursue the above-mentioned suggestions for improvement; (b) identify the organizations within and outside the United Nations system which had introduced such processes; and (c) analyse the outcome of such initiatives.

IV. Other business

22. The Committee confirmed that its 2001 session would be held at Geneva; the dates were to be determined but the meeting would most probably take place in September.

Annex

List of participants

Chairman: J. **Connor** (United Nations)
Vice-Chairman: D. B. **Waller** (IAEA)
Secretary: R. **Eggleston**

United Nations entities and programmes	
United Nations Secretariat	P. Civili B. de Fondaumiere
ACC secretariat	Q. S. Fareed
United Nations Development Programme	D. Landey
United Nations Environment Programme/ United Nations Office at Nairobi	A. Barabanov
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	J-M. Fakhouri A. Henning
United Nations Children's Fund	K. Sham Poo A. Laurini
United Nations Population Fund	K. Waki I. Henkin
World Food Programme	A. Namanga Ngongi
Specialized agencies, IAEA and related organizations	
International Labour Organization	D. Skerrett
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	K. Mehboob
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	H. Yushkiavitshus
International Civil Aviation Organization	V. Pattanayak
World Health Organization	H. Wild R. Leclair
International Telecommunication Union	D. J. Goossen
World Meteorological Organization	K. J. Charles
World Intellectual Property Organization	T. Keefer O. Fasehun

International Fund for Agricultural Development	J-L. Lawson
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	N. Mohanty
* * *	
International Atomic Energy Agency	D. B. Waller
* * *	
World Trade Organization	P. Rolian
* * *	
World Tourism Organization	R. Ahmed
* * *	
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization	F. Boyle